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BOOK REVIEWS.

L'ÉVOLUTION CRÉATRICE. Par Henri Bergson. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910.¹

This book is the most compendious of the works of M. Bergson. In it he intends, as he himself tells us, to apply to life in general the ideas which he has already elaborated elsewhere, more particularly in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (Paris, 1889). The book is divided into four parts. The first of these (*l'Évolution de la vie—mécanisme et finalité*) starts from the observation of subjective consciousness. We perceive only a continuum unrolling itself, incessantly modifying itself. This progress of consciousness in the making M. Bergson calls *la durée*. The *durée* in each one of us is our personality. At each moment it 'pushes,' 'shoots,' develops. Each moment is new and cannot be foreseen. No vital experience is lost. As a snowball rolls and gathers, so the personality of each. Our experience of duration is not 'thought': it is 'lived.' Each particular of experience is 'cut out' from the whole of duration by our senses and understanding. By reason, probably, of an unstable equilibrium of internal impulses the ultimate reality in the universe, as in us, 'pushes' and 'explodes' from moment to moment with the incessant development of its *élan vital*.

M. Bergson then discusses what he calls (1) *mécanisme*; by which is meant a metaphysic in which the whole of reality is postulated *en bloc* as eternal, and in which time is an illusion; and (2) *finalité*, a doctrine by which 'things and beings' do nothing but realize a preëxisting plan. Determinism (which for M. Bergson excludes liberty) and teleology 'of the classical type' are found to be untenable. Both are generated by an improper extension or application of certain concepts natural to our intelligence. Originally thought is wholly practical. Plan and mechanical necessity are therefore our familiars and these ideas are improperly carried over from the realm of practical necessity to the realm of speculative philosophy. The

¹ This review has been much delayed owing to the illness of the reviewer.

dominance of the ideas of determinism and teleology is due solely to the incidence of attention in the field of practice. The intellect is derivative, it is a precipitate of mind: it is characterized by a fundamental incapacity for the apprehension of life. It has to do solely with the static, whereas the 'Becoming' is the only real. For the apprehension of the Becoming we must throw ourselves upon the faculty of intuition, which is the faculty of direct perception.

In the second chapter we consider the three great lines along which evolution has progressed, vegetable, animal, and human life: parallel and complementary each to each. Vegetables are characterized by *torpeur*. They need no movement, but convert directly the inorganic into the organic. Animals through their power of locomotion have developed instinct. Instinct and intelligence are not different degrees of the same power, but differ in kind. Both, however, being differentiations of an original One, each carries with it something of the other. The greater the development, the greater the diversity, and therefore (from M. Bergson's point of view) the less the harmony. It is impossible to seize or adequately express the quality of the original unity in terms of any one of these developments alone.

The third chapter is an endeavor "to seize in itself and follow in its moments" the *cause génératrice*, i. e., the original unity. Here we find ourselves face to face with the painful dilemma that the intellect alone can ask the questions which the philosopher wants to know, but it never can answer them; while instinct which alone could answer our questions cannot be interrogated. If the intelligence that slumbers in instinct could be made to answer, it could tell us the most intimate secrets of life. The quality by which instinct 'knows' is, M. Bergson apprehends, most akin to the sympathetic insight of the artist. We can, he thinks, by an effort of the will, transcend intelligence and direct this faculty of sympathetic insight on to that which is freest from externality and intellectuality, *viz.*, the inward *durée*. By concentrating our attention on the quick edge of consciousness we shall be aware of incessant movement, of a "mounting and ascending force" which is life itself. Only here do we touch reality. Here the real "makes itself." Here alone is our personality. Here alone freedom. The intellect 'cuts out' from this continuum 'forms,' it relates the like to the like; it is itself fashioned in the process of its functioning;

that with which it works is dead matter, the static, which belongs to the descending scale of "that which unmakes itself." The material world is a construction of the intellect, which pieces together views taken from the outside of that which moves, but which as moving the intellect cannot apprehend.

In the last chapter M. Bergson endeavors to show how the understanding by submitting to discipline could overcome its limitations and help to produce a philosophy free from the two fundamental errors which have hitherto vitiated philosophy. These errors are (1) the illusion that we can think the unstable by means of the stable, the quick by means of the dead; and (2) the illusion of the void (non-being). Both these illusions arose from the fact that the intellect, a faculty evolved by practical necessity, had become habituated to the concentration of attention solely on what concerned our acts. All those parts of the continuum which came between were as nothing to it. We must try then to observe for the sake of observing and not merely for the sake of acting. If we succeed in doing this, the Absolute itself will reveal itself, very near to us, even in us. Its essence is psychologic, not mathematical or logical.

The philosophy of Forms, of Ideas, has sought ever for the unchangeable, the definite quality, the form or essence, the end. The great line of philosophic development from Plato to Plotinus by way of Aristotle and the Stoics, shows us a construction based on this illusion. So far as we in modern days trust to the cinematograph method natural to our *intellects*, we must arrive at similarly untrustworthy conclusions. There is more in the Becoming than in the Static. But for the conceptualists reality was the static. How could they get change or movement (which could not be denied) save by the degradation of the 'ideas' or by the 'illusive nothings' of space and time which 'creep between' the ideas and create "agitation without end."

Might not a new philosophy install itself on this extra-intellectual matter of knowledge? Might not consciousness by concentrated effort move in two directions at once, and seize from within and not merely observe from without (as hitherto) the two forms of reality? Should we not by this double effort be able to see the intellect springing up of itself and cutting itself out of the Absolute? Would not then the barriers fall between the matter and the form of sensible knowledge and between

the 'pure forms' of sensibility and the categories of the understanding?

The chapter closes with an analysis of Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophy, which is found to be vitiated by the same illusion. It is a patchwork of dead bits: there is no true vision of creative evolution.

M. Bergson's book reads like a romance. As a mighty river overbears all obstacles that might seem to obstruct its course and reaches the ocean of its dreams, so M. Bergson's brilliant pictorial style with wave after wave of metaphor, carries forward his reader, with an extraordinary sense of exhilaration, and almost convinces him for the time being that all difficulties are resolved and all antinomies reconciled. When one closes the book and reflects upon it all,—that perilous and materialistic process!—there emerges a stubborn discontent which had so often been overleaped or shoved aside, and one feels the need, the crying need, for more closely direct logical argument. Or, if one has not the courage to mention logic, after the overwhelming snubbing to which that most princely servant has been subjected,—might not one press upon Intuition, the new chamberlain who ushers us into the court of the king, that he would deliver up to us yet more of his golden gains, especially at that point where he watches the intellect 'cutting out' form and fashioning itself in the process?

Intuition and intellect interpenetrate each other, M. Bergson tells us. Can we be perfectly clear that in the perception exercised by the intuition no faint beginnings of that evil thing, the intellect, make themselves felt? Is the question so radically different from that question to which philosophy is accustomed: 'Is there such a thing as a pure sensation'?

M. Bergson is obliged to confess, though he hates to do it, that *la durée* is at once both a unity and a multiplicity. This is the report of intuition. One wonders why, when intuition is turned on to that living point where the intellect is selecting the materials of form (*lier la même au même*), it is not aware of difference also? How can the intellect build up the idea of form or essence, as M. Bergson says it does, by a concentration of impressions, if it was unaware of difference as well as of sameness? If there is an identity which persists throughout many changes, many differences, if the perception of that identity is the result of the interaction of intellect and its

object, why call it an illusion? M. Bergson's account of the genesis of the idea is about as unsatisfactory as anything in his book. One cannot help thinking that he is a little the victim of his own metaphors here as elsewhere. He conceives of the intellect more or less as a material instrument. It 'cuts out' forms. It has 'moulds' into which the same, and nothing but the same, can fit.

Is it correct to say that M. Bergson's idea of 'freedom' is equivalent to "that which cannot be foretold"? Is it therefore true to say "the more unexpected the more free"? Is not this to reduce the quality of freedom very near to the quality of the action of the insane?

But criticism of this kind is perhaps out of place, even if there be anything in it. For what M. Bergson is seeking to do is not to give us a philosophy ready made. Instead he opens his mind to us with an extraordinary frankness, and shows us its working, and draws our attention to those parts of what he finds which seem incongruous with philosophy as he finds it.

Whatever any other school of philosophy may say to him, idealists at least cannot protest when he tells them that truth cannot be found save in the closest touch with the living reality. It is true that the 'life' by which idealists are apt to test their thought is the organic movement of society. It is difficult to believe that this is not life in the making. It is difficult, too, to believe that 'life' thus conceived is less full, less near to reality than is the stream of personal inner consciousness, especially when from that stream there has been ejected as flotsam and jetsam everything having the taint of 'form,' and attention is restricted to the attenuated edge of that twilight consciousness. Is not this edge necessarily twilight, so long as we restrict attention to it? Do we not in restricting attention to it restrict the movement itself; that inevitable movement towards construction, which, while it is for M. Bergson a deterioration, has also for its product—as he sees—the brilliant nucleus of mind?

When a growing dissatisfaction with M. Bergson's treatment of this or that particular point produces in one a sense of estrangement from him, one feels oneself continually plucked back by the sense of warm welcome. For coming, as it does, from the side of physical science, does not his point of view make possible an unprecedented *rapprochement* between all those who

call themselves idealists and those who, whether they call themselves 'naturalists' or 'materialists' or 'empiricists,' are agreed in finding the structure of 'things' by 'mind' arrant rubbish, and in finding an intellectual agnosticism the only possible attitude towards ultimate Reality? It is true that unless M. Bergson can see his way to the development of his intuitionism, a development which will give us a really trustworthy bridge between it and intellectualism (if he still is unable to allow their identity at bottom), then his new 'philosophy' must remain esoteric, and be,—even for the inner circle,—a new agnosticism. I think this book contains some intimation of some such possible development (*e. g.*, pp. 326, 389, 390). Idealists, on their side, will not be hurt by being reminded that there may be more things in heaven and earth than are included in their philosophy.

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CREATIVE EVOLUTION. By Henri Bergson. Translated by Arthur Mitchell, Ph.D. London: Macmillan & Co., 1911. Pp. viii, 425.

The work of translation, a peculiarly difficult task when French has to be rendered into English, has been in the main very successfully done. The book stands better than most works of the kind, the test of being read by itself without reference to the French; by far the greater part of it might well be taken for a spirited original treatise. It is only here and there that an unidiomatic sentence betrays to a careful eye or ear that one is dealing with a version, and that the book from which the version is made was written in French. Thus I find one instance (p. 384) of the inversion, not uncommon in French, but intolerable in English prose, by which an adjective predicate is made to precede its subject ("Relative, therefore, seemed to be sensuous intuition"). Occasionally French idiom is followed in the use of prepositions with an unfortunate effect. Thus (p. 347), "to dispense us with this effort," meaning "to dispense us from" or "to enable us to dispense with" (p. 233); "What hopeless difficulties philosophy falls into *for* not having undertaken this task," should be, "through not having undertaken," or, better, "because she has not undertaken." Our personality is said to "coast around" space continually in sen-